




Staff Code of Conduct

Policy number	6	Person responsible	DD
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Signed		Date	1/2/26

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this Code is to ensure that all employees and volunteers are aware of the standards of conduct required of them, and that our provisions are environments where everyone is safe, happy, and treated with respect.

The Code applies to all employees and volunteers, and will help everyone to understand how they can fulfil their obligations in performing their role. The term 'employees' encompasses employees, officers, consultants, contractors, casual workers and agency workers.

The Code itself does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, or worker's contract of engagement, and may be amended at any time. Breach of this Code, or the policies, standards, and guidance listed below, may result in disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal. This will apply and disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed on or external to Oakwood sites, and during or outside working hours.

It is acknowledged that this Code cannot cover every eventuality. As such Oakwood will always have regard to the intent of this Code in its application to matters which may not be explicitly covered.

It is the responsibility of all employees and volunteers to read and be familiar with Oakwood policies, standards, and guidance and this code of conduct.

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive. Other policies and guidance which provide direction as to responsibilities and standards of conduct required, may be deemed relevant when considering whether there has been a breach of this Code.

Expected standards of personal and professional conduct

Our children and young people, colleagues, the communities we serve, and the wider public are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees and volunteers. All employees and volunteers must always act with honesty, integrity, impartiality, and in the interests of children and young people.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Maintaining high standards of attendance and punctuality.
- Placing the well-being, safety, and learning of children, young people, and vulnerable adults at the centre of their work.
- Observing appropriate professional boundaries with children and young people, colleagues, and the wider community, acting in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they were not doing so.

- Creating a safe learning and working environment, and not acting or omitting to act in a way which undermines this.
- Having high expectations for all children and young people, a commitment to addressing underachievement, and working to help children and young people progress regardless of their background and personal circumstances.
- Treating all children and young people, colleagues, and members of the community fairly and with dignity and respect, taking their knowledge, views, opinions and feelings seriously, and valuing diversity and individuality.
- Modelling the characteristics they are trying to inspire in children and young people, including enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience, and a genuine concern for other people.
- Reflecting on their own practice, developing their skills, knowledge and expertise, and adapting appropriately to learn with and from colleagues.
- Responding sensitively to the differences in the backgrounds and circumstances of children and young people, recognising the key role that parents and carers play in education.
- Seeking to work in partnership with parents and carers, respecting their views and promoting understanding and co-operation to support learning and wellbeing in and out of provision.
- Ensuring that the same professional standards are always applied regardless of culture, disability, gender identity, language, racial origin, religious belief, and/or sexual identity.
- Not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Not expressing personal beliefs in a way that may exploit the vulnerability of children and young people or might lead them to break the law.
- Having proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies, and practices of Oakwood and its provisions, and always acting within the statutory frameworks, policies and guidance which set out their duties and responsibilities.
- Not behaving in a manner or taking action which may bring Oakwood or any of its provisions into disrepute.

Standards of appearance

All employees and volunteers must maintain an appropriate standard of dress and personal hygiene and appearance in their role, which promotes a positive and professional image and takes account of health and safety considerations.

Clothing and footwear must be smart, safe, and clean; footwear needs to be closed at the toe and long hair tied back where there is contact with children and young people. Jewellery should be minimal in case of any physical contact with children and young people.

Employees and volunteers must ensure they are dressed in ways which:

- Are appropriate to their role and not likely to be viewed as offensive or revealing.
- Are professional and acts as a role model for our children and young people about how to dress in the workplace.
- Are safe in order to carry out their duties at all times.
- Do not distract, cause embarrassment, or give rise to misunderstanding.
- Are religious and culturally sensitive, free of any political or otherwise contentious slogans, and not considered to be discriminatory.

Within these general guidelines, cultural, religious, or traditional dress, whether on a day-to-day basis or to mark particular occasions will normally be acceptable at the Directors discretion.

Safeguarding children and young people

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone and all Oakwood provisions are committed safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people, and we require all employees and volunteers to share this commitment.

All employees and volunteers have a duty to provide a safe learning environment, to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults from harm, and to report any concerns they have.

Reporting allegations or low-level concerns

Allegations of abuse or any low-level concerns arising in relation to people working in a provision must immediately be reported and managed in accordance with Oakwood's Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Policy within the Safeguarding Policy.

Allegations

Allegations which may meet the harm threshold are those which indicate that an employee, a person with permission to be on the premises or carrying out any activity on behalf of the provision, or a volunteer may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child and young person, or may have harmed a child and young person
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and young person

- Behaved towards a child and young person or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children or young people
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children or young people; including behaviour outside of work. This is known as transferable risk.

This applies to any child or young person the employee or volunteer has contact with in their personal, professional, or community life.

Low-level concerns

Low-level concerns are concerns which may not meet the threshold set out above, but may indicate that an adult working in or on behalf of the provision may have acted in a way that, is inconsistent with this Code (including inappropriate conduct outside of work).

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being over friendly with children, young people, or vulnerable adults.
- Having favourites.
- Taking photographs of children, young people, or vulnerable adults on their mobile phone.
- Engaging with children, young people, or vulnerable adults on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door.
- Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating, or offensive language.

We also encourage employees and volunteers to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If unsure as to whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage employees and volunteers to report it.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the employee or volunteer supported to correct it at an early stage. This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust, and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored, and reinforced by all employees, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Whistleblowing

The Directors of Oakwood are committed to the highest possible standards of transparency, probity, and accountability. They will listen to concerns raised and will take action to address any improper practice. In line with this commitment, anyone with genuine concerns regarding any aspect of Oakwood's work is encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns and can be confident that they can do so without fear of reprisal or victimisation.

The Whistleblowing Policy provides a framework to be used by employees and volunteers to raise concerns, and to be used by Oakwood in seeking to address and resolve them. It aims to ensure that any concerns are managed in a fair, consistent, prompt and supportive manner, and provides channels for individuals to pursue their concerns further if they are dissatisfied with the response.

Should circumstances arise where individuals have concerns in relation to poor or unsafe practice, or potential failures within a provision's safeguarding regime, which are such that no immediate referral is required, the Whistleblowing Policy provides both internal and external channels for them to raise their concerns.

ICT Acceptable Use

General

All use of IT within Oakwood Education must be appropriate for the session and compliant with the expectations set out in the safeguarding policy.

Please see the safeguarding policy for further details.

Passwords

Under no circumstances should an employee share their log in details or password with any other person, including fellow employees, agency workers, or children and young people.

Responsible use of social media

All employees and volunteers must ensure that they establish safe and responsible online behaviours, and ensure that any communication with a third party while acting as a representative of Oakwood, specifically including children and young people, parents, or carers, through web based or telecommunication interactions take place within explicit professional boundaries.

All employees must adhere to the Social Media policy. Social media includes apps like WhatsApp and platforms such as X (Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram. Employees and volunteers must only communicate with children and young people, parents, and carers using official systems, and any such communication must be in a professional tone and manner.

Employees and volunteers must never send requests to or accept requests from children and young people to communicate via any form of social media, and should not give their personal contact details to children and young people, for example e-mail address, home or mobile telephone numbers, or details of web based identities. If children and young people locate these by any other means and attempt to contact or correspond with an employee or volunteer, they should not respond and must report the matter to the provision's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Employees and volunteers must also ensure that they do not bring Oakwood Education into disrepute through their use of social media, this includes the use of employee WhatsApp groups. As part of this, employees and volunteers must ensure that appropriate privacy and security settings are in place.

Use of personal devices

Staff personal mobile phones are allowed to be used during the sessions for work-related situations, such as directions to a location or researching a topic. Members of staff have their phones on them in case of emergency and if an urgent phone call is required. Staff must never use their personal mobile phone or cameras to take photographs during working hours. Doing so will be considered gross misconduct and may result in instant dismissal.

Confidentiality

All employees and volunteers are expected to comply with the relevant provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation, and will receive appropriate training and guidance. Any information they have access to, or are responsible for, must be managed appropriately and any requirements for confidentiality and security observed.

Information must not be disclosed to any person or authority, for example a parent or the police, without observing the correct procedure for disclosure as set out in the provision's Data Protection Policy. Nothing shall prevent a person from disclosing information that they are entitled to disclose under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 as amended, provided that the disclosure is made in accordance with the provisions of that Act/s.

Health and safety

General

It is everyone's responsibility to report Health and Safety concerns in a timely manner. All employees and volunteers are required to exercise their duty of care by taking responsibility for their own health and safety, and the health and safety of other people who may be affected by their acts or failure to act (omissions). Full guidance regarding health and safety is set out in the Health and Safety Policy, and in any risk assessments relevant to specific roles or circumstances.

No smoking or vaping policy

Oakwood operates a no smoking or vaping policy. Employees and volunteers should not allow children and young people to see them smoking or vaping off site during breaks, or prior to starting or when ending work on site.

Misuse of alcohol or drugs

Employees and volunteers must never jeopardise their own health and safety or that of others, or bring Oakwood into disrepute, through the misuse of alcohol or drugs, whether illegal or legal, including prescribed medication.

Where alcohol or drug misuse is identified, employees and volunteers will be offered appropriate support, and individual circumstances will be considered with respect to any disciplinary action that may be taken.

Prohibited items

Under no circumstances should anyone be found with prohibited items whilst at work. Prohibited items may be, but are not limited to:

- Weapons
- Knives
- Alcohol
- Drugs

Prescribed medication and tobacco must be kept in a secure environment and locked away. These items must not be taken out in view of the CYP.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Oakwood Education is committed to equality and values diversity, and as such is committed to fulfilling its Equality Duty obligations. We expect all employees and volunteers to share this commitment to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share characteristics, such as age, gender, race and faith, and people who do not share them. All employees and volunteers are required to treat all people with whom they come into contact with dignity and respect, and are entitled to expect this in return.